



# BRIEFING NOTE: INTRODUCTION TO THE HCV ASSESSOR LICENSING SCHEME



August 2014



## About the ALS

### Why develop a licensing scheme for HCV assessors?

Since its original development in the late 1990s, the HCV approach has been widely used for protecting the most important environmental and social values in production landscapes (e.g. forestry and agriculture). However, until now there has been very little assurance of the competence of HCV assessors which has resulted in considerable variation in the quality of the assessments undertaken and the resulting management guidelines adopted.

The HCV Resource Network (HCVRN) was established for the many different organisations – forestry & agricultural commodity growers, companies, standards organisations, NGOs, technical experts - with a shared interest in seeing the HCV approach used effectively. Recognising that the issue of assessor competence needs to be addressed, the HCVRN has developed the Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS) to provide some quality assurance of HCV assessments.

### What will the ALS deliver?

The aim of the ALS is to promote a higher quality and more consistent implementation of the HCV approach and provide a **reasonable level of assurance of consistency and quality** for those commissioning, conducting and using HCV assessments. This will be achieved through a combination of:

- **Provision of improved tools for assessors** through a new HCV Assessment Manual, together with standard templates for reporting<sup>1</sup>.
- **Assurance of assessor competence** through the license application requirements and ongoing monitoring of reports by licensed assessors.

### Main benefits

**Companies commissioning assessments:** More competent assessors, greater levels of quality assurance and increased transparency all contribute to risk reduction. HCVs are more likely to be correctly identified in the first place, the evidence base and



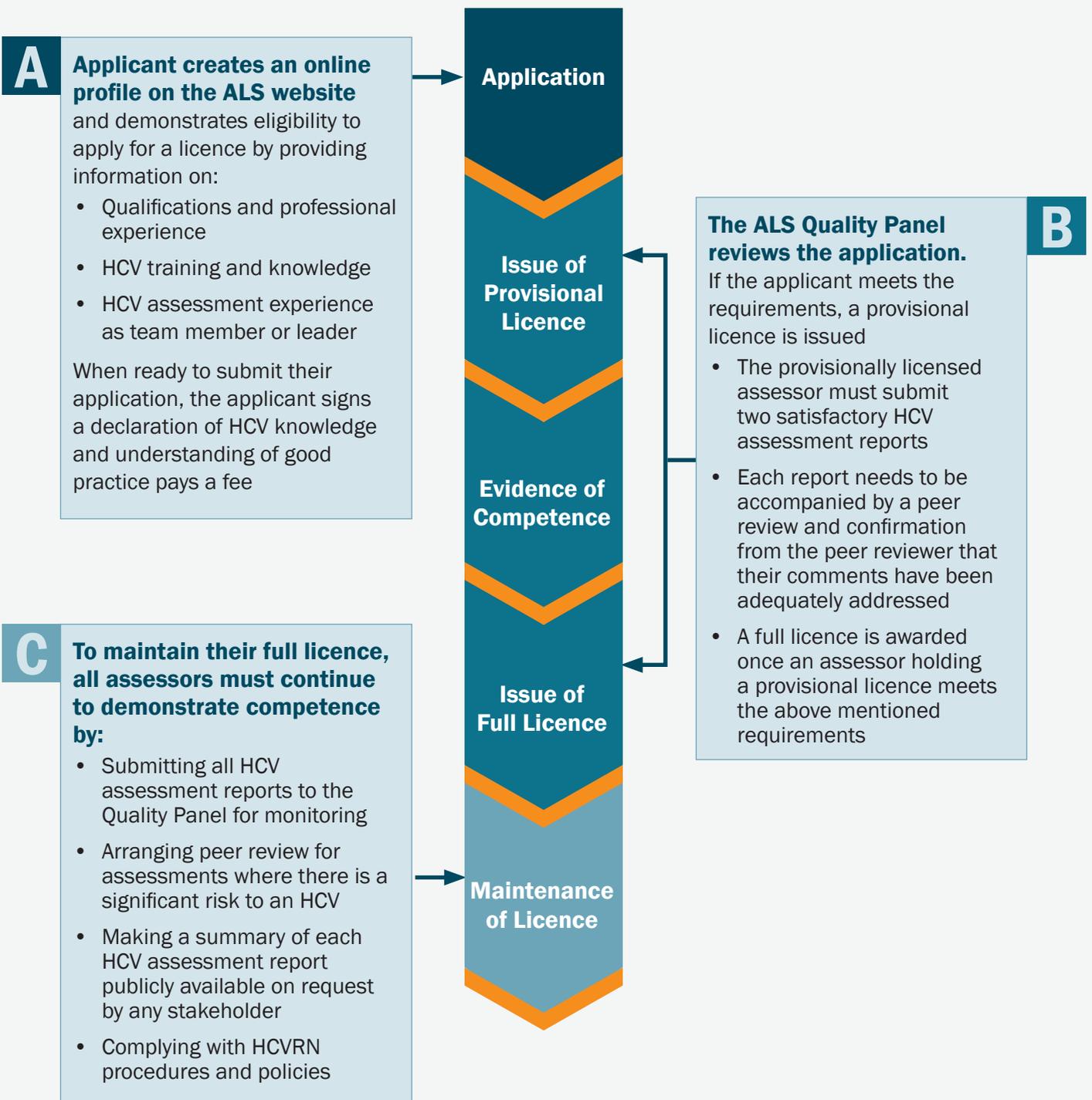
<sup>1</sup> For further information on the new tools for assessors, contact: [secretariat@hcvnetwork.org](mailto:secretariat@hcvnetwork.org)



recommendations for HCV management should be stronger and stakeholders will have been involved throughout the process – therefore reducing the potential for conflict.

**Assessors:** Improve their understanding of the HCV approach, demonstrate their competence to carry out HCV assessments and peer review HCV assessment reports, be qualified to conduct HCV assessments when HCVRN licensed assessors are required, be showcased in the HCV assessor database and become part of a highly-qualified group of HCV global experts, and have access to a forum of HCV practitioners and experts.

## How will assessors apply and maintain a licence?



## Quality assurance

The ALS provides quality assurance of HCV assessment reports through:

- Screening of applicants for licences by a Quality Manager
- Award of full licences only to provisional licence holders that demonstrate competence by adequately leading and reporting on two assessments
- Ongoing monitoring by the Quality Panel of licensed assessor reports and their adherence to HCVRN procedures described in the HCV Assessment Manual and related documents
- Peer review of all reports by provisionally licensed assessors and of all reports by full licence-holders where there is a significant risk to one or more HCVs
- Scrutiny by stakeholders familiar with the context of assessments – public summaries of all reports undertaken under the ALS will be available on request from assessors
- A complaints procedure to address serious issues arising from a) stakeholders about the running of the ALS, or about licensed assessors and their work; b) an applicant or licensed assessors related to decisions by the Quality Panel. In both cases, final authority rests with the HCVRN Management Committee

The **Quality Panel** is composed of experts with capacity to review reports in Bahasa, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

The **pool of peer reviewers** have relevant expertise, language skills and regional knowledge and have made a commitment to undertake peer reviews following the methodology and guidance in the HCV Assessment Manual. Assessors will arrange peer reviews directly with reviewers listed on the ALS website.





## Costs and Fees

The cost of running the ALS need to be recovered from income it generates. Costs are expected to be modest compared to the benefits to companies commissioning assessments, certification schemes requiring robust assessments and assessors wanting to demonstrate their competence. Fees are:

- a) **Application fee (USD \$500)** payable by each applicant for a provisional licence.
- b) **Annual renewal fee (USD \$250):** An annual renewal fee will be charged to all licence holders to help maintain the ALS web portal and information services and complaints procedure.
- c) **HCV assessment report monitoring fee:** Two types of report fees will be charged depending on the level of scrutiny required from the Quality Panel:  
**Tier 1 (USD \$2,000)** and **Tier 2 (USD \$900)**. Assessors are expected to recover these fees from their clients.



For more information on fees, please read our **prospective assessors leaflet**.

## Your feedback and more information

There will be a formal review of the ALS after 2 years of operation to assess its effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency and to review feedback and lessons learned.

For questions regarding the ALS visit our website [www.hcvnetwork.org](http://www.hcvnetwork.org) or contact [secretariat@hcvnetwork.org](mailto:secretariat@hcvnetwork.org)

